

CATHERINE'S EMBASSY TO FLORENCE

nuncio at Naples. No tongue nor pen, he declares, can adequately express his urgent needs; the provinces are in anarchy, the mercenaries are clamouring for pay, he is tormented inwardly more than it is fitting to write, and Queen Giovanna herself seems beginning to favour the enemies of the Church.¹ His counsels had been further weakened by the loss of the loyal and strenuous Cardinal Pierre d'Estaing, who died in November. At the beginning of the new year, 1378, Gregory took the extreme step of appealing to Bernabo Visconti, and sent the Bishop of Urbino to propose their own ally to the Florentines as arbitrator. He resolved simultaneously to win over the Parte Guelfa to his side, by means of Catherine. "It has been written to me," he said to Fra Raimondo, "that, if Catherine of Siena goes to Florence, I shall have peace." The friar answered that they were all ready, in obedience to his Holiness, to encounter martyrdom. "I do not wish you to go," replied the Pope, "because they would maltreat you; but do not believe that they will harm Catherine, for she is a woman and they hold her in reverence."² At the Pope's bidding, Raimondo at once drew up the necessary bulls and credentials, and despatched them to Catherine, who, "like a laughter of true obedience," instantly started for Florence.

The exact date is uncertain, but it was at least not later than the beginning of March, 1378, that Catherine thus, for the third time, found herself within the walls of Florence. It is clear that her mission on behalf of the Pope was less to the Commune or People as a whole, than to the Parte Guelfa. "Following the hint that Niccolo Soderini had given Fra Raimondo, she was to use her moral influence in support of the measures adopted by the captains of the Party to prevent the extreme spirits on the opposite side from interrupting the peace negotiations, that had already begun, and to ensure that this time the Republic should seek peace with deeds no less than

¹ Brief to Pietro Raffini, dated Rome, December 26, 1377. Pastor, *esehtchte*, I. doc. 8.

² *Legenda*, III. vi. 29 (§ 423).